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Record of Decision for environmental document signed by INS and JTF-6

El Paso, Texas ---- In a signing ceremony conducted yesterday at Joint Task Force Six (JTF-6) Headquarters, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and Joint Task Force Six (JTF-6) signed the Record of Decision for the Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (SPEIS) for INS and JTF-6 support activities to be conducted within the four Southwest border states of California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. The SPEIS is required by the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and its amendments.

The decision support document addresses the environmental impacts of counter drug support activities and establishes the environmental framework for the conduct of JTF-6 activities in support of INS, in an area of operations that encompasses approximately 40 million acres along the Southwest border area. The SPEIS also addresses the environmental impact of the implementation of the INS' Integrated Surveillance Intelligence System, which includes the installation and monitoring of remote sensing systems such as ground sensors, low level television cameras and the conduct of other activities aimed at reducing the flow of illegal drugs into the United States.

"This is clearly a partnership between the Department of Defense and the Immigration and Naturalization Service aimed at furthering our responsibility as stewards of the environment," said David Yentzer, INS Assistant Commissioner for Administration, during the signing ceremony.

"JTF-6's environmental track record clearly reflects the environmental consciousness of our personnel," Brig. Gen. F Joseph Prasek, JTF-6 Commanding General, said. "This document will continue to guide our counter drug support efforts along the Southwest border area."

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Record of Decision signing

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“The counter drug operations, conducted by JTF-6 in support of INS and the U.S. Border Patrol, provide the soldiers, sailors, Marines and airmen who perform these missions with tremendous training opportunities that are directly related to their military skills,” said Prasek. “This united effort is of great mutual benefit to both the INS and the Department of Defense.”

The signing of the official Record of Decision is the final step of the process required by NEPA to produce the SPEIS. In the first step of the process, public input was solicited during 10 public scoping meetings conducted at: El Centro and San Diego, Calif.; Sierra Vista and Yuma, Ariz.; Deming, N.M.; and El Paso, Marfa, McAllen, Laredo and Del Rio, Texas. Written public comment was also incorporated in the SPEIS.

The second step of the process involved the gathering of environmental data, incorporating public input, and the preparation of SPEIS drafts and the final document.

JTF-6, the Department of Defense’s organization tasked to provide counter drug support to local, state, regional and federal law agencies throughout the continental United States, routinely provides support to the U.S. Border Patrol, in the Southwest border area. Past JTF-6 support to the U.S. Border Patrol has included road construction and improvement, border lights installation, anti-vehicle barrier construction, aviation reconnaissance and intelligence support, among other types of counter drug support efforts.

The SPEIS document supplements the original Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement issued in 1994. The SPEIS will cover the INS/JTF-6 activities along the Southwest border through the next five years.

Notices of availability have been published in local newspapers throughout the study corridor and in the Federal Register. A copy of the final SPEIS report is available on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Worth District, website: http://www.swf.usace.army.mil/ins/ea_eis_files/env4.pdf